

Secretary's Harassment, Hazing, and Bullying Prevention Advisory Council
Agency of Education – The Cavern Conference Room
1311 U. S. Route 302 – Berlin, Barre, VT
November 18, 2013

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Members Present: Tracey Tsugawa, Kim Brittenham, Kathy Johnson, Alayna Badeau, Tomás Rogel, Nicole Mace, Dana Kaplan, Lucie Garand, Jeff Francis, Ken Page, Mill Moore, Henri Sparks
AOE: Charles Johnson, Barbara Crippen, Perry Thompson

AGENDA:

- Introduction of new student representatives
- Review/Discussion of listening tour summary (what was heard, implications for the council's work and recommendations)

INTRODUCTIONS:

Tsugawa introduced the two new student representatives on the Council: Alayna Badeau and Tomás Rogel. The third new student representative, Nicole Hammarstrom, was unable to attend.

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF LISTENING TOUR SUMMARY:

Council members identified key insights, lessons, and themes gathered during the listening tour:

Insights/Lessons

- Kids don't trust adults to solve problems.
- Not enough "go to" people in schools.
- Students feel teachers and administrators don't have time to address students' concerns.
- Non-curricular settings provide opportunities for relationship building, but more and more of those positions are held by non-teaching adults.
- Students do know what bullying is, but are less aware of how their personal situations make them vulnerable, either developmentally or socially.
- Adults assume power relationships between students are equal, which serves both to empower the bully and add to the burden of the target.
- Adults also need to pay attention to the little things that happen.
- Smaller schools can be more difficult for students who are different because there is no place to hide.
- There is a lack of accountability.
- Addressing HHB is not a priority in the state.

Key Themes

- There are inconsistencies in response to HHB and student reporting.

- We cannot legislate the problem away or set policies that will eliminate it; a key to improving the situation is developing better relationships between students and adults.
- Time and academic performance are factors; teachers are competing for students' time due to the focus on academic performance, which leads to less time for the development of social relationships with teachers.
- Teachers need training on how to intervene, how to conduct effective teacher advisory sessions.
- Being told to go to the planning room and punitive measures are not effective solutions, more thoughtful consequences would be better. For example, social consequences such as not being allowed to play/practice (if an athlete) or being restricted from attending a school dance or other school event.
- There is a great disparity and lack of consistency in the training of administrators; more focus should be placed on best practices.
- Who gets to define restorative justice? We need more effective student involvement in the process.
- Not enough discussion and/or action occurs regarding the development and maintenance of better school climates. Students believe no one is managing their school's culture.
- More training: can we be more proactive rather than reactive?
- Students are not taught about healthy relationships and positive social skills and how to build and maintain them; students need time to work on these, especially in the upper grades.
- Cyberbullying and its impact on the relationship among teenagers needs more attention. Schools are required by the federal government to have internet safety classes as part of a proactive approach to combatting the growing problem of cyberbullying.

New/Surprising

- There are very few safe spaces in schools and there is more physical violence reported than was expected.
- Legacy of siblings and parents have a negative impact on the younger siblings/children coming into schools.

NEXT STEPS

Discussion then turned to the identification of next steps for the council:

- Conduct a listening tour with teachers and potentially another for administrators; any such tour should be planned for after Town Meeting and should include the same schools as the Listening Tour for students.
- Report back to the principals of the schools selected for this year's Listening Tour with key recommendations.
- Release a press release summarizing the Tour and its findings in January.
- Submit the annual report to the Legislature in January. The report should include a summary of the work of the council over the past year, a summary of the listening tour and recommendations from students, a request for funding for more training for school staff, and convey a clear message that the Council can and will treat these issues very seriously. A list of the workshops from the Youth Congress should be included as an Addendum to the report.
- Set up a meeting with the Senate and House Education committees.
- Write short articles about bullying and harassment for distribution in local newspapers.
- Meet with the new Secretary of Education (January council meeting).